

# Assessment of Colorado Springs Police Department Use of Force

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# Scope of Work

**Comprehensive, mixed-methods approach to examine CSPD use of force**

## **Scope of Work Includes:**

1. Review of CSPD use of force policies and practices
2. Quantitative analyses of physical force, weapons used, types of force, force effectiveness, citizen injuries, and officer injuries (2017-2020)
3. Quantitative analyses of pointing of firearm incidents (2017-2020)
4. Qualitative review of pointing of firearm incidents (random sample)
5. Assessment of community perspectives (focus groups and survey)
6. Assessment of CSPD officer perspectives (focus groups and survey)
7. Interviews with CSPD command staff
8. Recommendations for improvements to UOF policies, data collection, training, supervision, and transparency

# Report Overview

## Section 2

**Policies, Practices, and Peer Comparisons:** Review of CSPD policies and practices, comparison of reportable force and use of force policies with 9 peer agencies

## Section 3

**Data and Research Methods:** Description of definitions, quantitative and qualitative data, statistical analyses, limitations of methods, appropriate interpretation of findings

## Section 4

**Use of Physical Force and Weapons Used:** Quantitative analyses of 48 months of use of force data and arrest data (Jan 2017 – Dec 2020)

## Section 5

**Types of Force, Effectiveness and Injuries:** Analyses of specific types of force, effectiveness of different types of force, injuries that occur during use of force encounters (subjects and officers)

## Section 6

**Pointing of Firearm:** Quantitative analysis of 47 months of pointing of firearms (Feb 2017 – Dec 2020) and qualitative analysis and in-depth review of sample of 140 pointing of firearm incidents

## Section 7

**Community Perspectives:** Focus group with Chief's Community Leader's Group, and survey of Colorado Springs residents on their perceptions of CSPD, police-community relations, use of force, recommendations

## Section 8

**Officer Perspectives:** Focus groups with CSPD officers and supervisors, survey of CSPD sworn personnel on their perceptions of police-community relations, use of force, recommendations

## Section 9

**Recommendations:** 8 general recommendations and 26 specific actions steps for improvements in use of force policy, data collection, training, supervision, and transparency

# Research Questions

1. What factors contribute to use and severity of force?
2. How does CSPD use of force policy and training compare to peer cities?
3. Does the rate and severity of force align with racial/ethnic groups' representation *at risk* for having force used against them by police?
4. What are possible explanations for disparities in use of force?
5. What factors contribute to the likelihood of officer and citizen injuries?
6. How do community members perceive use of force and police-community relations?
7. How do CSPD officers perceive police use of force and police-community relations?
8. What improvements should be made to use of force policies, training, and data collection to meet current best practices?

# Types of Data and Analyses

**No single research approach or statistical method is without limitations**

- Best approach is to **triangulate** by using: (1) multiple research methods, (2) multiple data sources, and (3) multiple statistical techniques

## Data Sources Used

- (1) Reported use of force: a) physical force, b) pointing of firearms, c) canines
- (2) Arrests
- (3) Reported criminal incidents / suspects
- (4) U.S. Census
- (5) CSPD officer survey
- (6) CS citizen survey
- (7) Focus group narratives

## Statistical Analyses Conducted

- (1) Frequency distributions
- (2) Crosstabulation (bi-variate) comparisons
- (3) Disproportionality indices and ratios (using multiple benchmarks)
- (4) Multivariate prediction modeling (logistic regression, OLS regression, and hierarchical linear modeling)
- (5) Geographic analyses
- (6) Interrupted time series analyses

# Summary of Findings (1)

## Policy Review & Comparison to Peer Agencies

- Several limitations to peer agency comparisons
- Only appropriate to compare use of force policies

### Meeting Best Practices

1. Require de-escalation tactics
2. Verbal warning before deadly force
3. Rendering first-aid
4. Duty to intervene

### Leading Best Practices

1. Separate UOF policies
2. Critical Decision Making Model rather than UOF Continuum
3. Prohibits chokeholds in all cases

### Not Meeting Best Practices

1. Public issuance of annual report on use of force

# Summary of Findings (2)

## Physical Force & Weapons Used

- 2017-2020: # of UOF incidents increase 24%; arrests resulting in force increased from 1.9% to 2.3%
- Of individuals who had physical force used against them:
  - 81% Male
  - Race/Ethnicity: 57% White, 23% Black, 17% Hispanic
  - 53% displaying active resistance; 45% active aggression
  - 70% impaired – alcohol/drugs (56%) or BH issues (14%)
  - 7% repeat UOF within 4-year period
- **Benchmark Comparisons of Use of Force**
  - Blacks: Disparity ratios based on residential population very high; ratios using arrests and criminal suspects as benchmarks range from less than 1.0 (less likely to have UOF) to slightly/moderately more likely to have UOF
  - Hispanics: Disparity ratios low across all benchmarks; Hispanics equally or less likely to experience UOF
- **Multivariate Analyses of Arrests Predicting UOF**
  - After controlling for some other factors, racial disparities in UOF remain for Blacks and Hispanic arrestees (1.2, 1.3 times more likely)
  - Cannot control for resistance shown, and other important variables

# Summary of Findings (3)

## Types of Force, Effectiveness, & Injuries

- Weaponless force most common (67%), among most effective (varies by technique)
- TASER second most common (28%), least effective
- 73% of subjects injured, mostly minor (TASER probes, bodily injury)
- Officers injured about 20% of time—most likely with weaponless
- Multivariate Analyses of UOF Predicting Injuries
  - Citizen injuries: Events involving males, resistant, impaired, emotionally disturbed all more likely to be injured; Blacks less likely to be injured, Hispanics equally likely to be injured; no neighborhood impact
  - Officer injuries: Events involving resistant subject, multiple force types used, and female officer all more likely to be injured
  - Female officers less likely to use force, but more likely to be injured when they use force; more likely to deploy Taser (least effective tactic)



# Summary of Findings (4)

## Pointing of Firearm

### Data Analysis

- Feb 2017 – Dec 2020: 2/3 of all force; stable 2017-2019, decreased 11.9% in 2020
- Of individuals who had Firearms Pointed at them:
  - 81% Male; 11% repeats; Race/Ethnicity: 53% White, 22% Black, 19% Hispanic
- Benchmark Comparisons of Pointing of Firearms
  - Blacks: Disparity ratios for residential population very high; ratios using arrests and criminal suspects range from less than 1.0 (less likely) to slightly/moderately more likely
  - Hispanics: Disparity ratios ranged from slightly to moderately more likely
- No multivariate analyses due to data limitations

### Case Review

- Sample of 140 POF incidents 2017-2020
  - 77% -- appropriate, justified, and consistent with facts described
  - 13.6% -- Officers applied inappropriate force and/or unnecessarily escalated encounters
  - 9% -- CSPD supervisory oversight and review was insufficient

# Summary of Findings (5)

## Citizen Survey / Focus Groups

- N= 863 respondents; 1 focus group
- Convenience sampling – unable to generalize findings to all CS residents
- Slight majority reported positive attitudes towards and experiences with CSPD
- Split in experiences (e.g., most report either highly positive or highly negative perceptions of CSPD)
- Non-White respondents had significantly less positive perceptions than White respondents
- Desire for more transparency, training, diversity, and non-enforcement related interactions

## Officer Survey / Focus Groups

- N=335 respondents (48% response rate); 3 focus groups
- Majority have positive perceptions of police-community relations, but agree support for police varies across the city
- Concerns for staffing, lack of time to engage community
- Concerns for officer safety related to:
  - Perceived need for more hands-on, interactive UOF training
  - Legislative changes enacted in SB 20-217
- Wanted more transparency with public, faster release of information and BWC footage

# Recommendations (1)

## **8 Recommendations and 26 Associated Action Items**

1. Enhance agency culture that emphasizes, reinforces, and rewards the use of de-escalation
2. Continue the work of CSPD's Use of Force Committee and provide updates to agency and public about its work
3. Review the documentation, policy, training, and oversight related to pointing of firearms
4. Conduct an independent audit of CSPD use of force training to ensure meeting industry best practices

# Recommendations (2)

5. Enhance transparency through timely release of information to public to improve confidence and trust
6. Continue to enhance supervision, accountability & oversight related to use of force
7. Review and make appropriate changes to use of force data collection to meet best practices
8. Continue to work internally and externally to monitor and reduce racial/ethnic disparities in use of force

# Key Observations

1. CSPD is professional, progressive agency seeking opportunities for continuous improvement
2. Multiple measures examining disparity show no or only modest differences in UOF across racial/ethnic groups
3. Community perspectives re: CSPD are bifurcated, especially by race – must work to build trust
4. Pointing of firearms needs most attention – implement changes in policy, training, documentation
5. Concerns raised by officers re: training must be addressed – focus on safety of officers and the public
6. Great opportunity for Colorado Springs - additional transparency requested by both community members and officers
  - provides common ground moving forward
  - comprehensive report provides baseline measures

# Questions? Contact Information

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